

ship, the first by Europeans in North America. That expedition, however, established a temporary settlement in what came to be called the "land of Ayllón." Whether this settlement, known as San Miguel de Gualdape, occurred along the shores of the Jordan (Cape Fear) River or southward some 120 miles at Waccamaw Neck, at the mouth of Winyaw Bay, has never been determined. In either case, the expedition failed in its attempt to establish a permanent settlement. Problems with the Indians, who refused to provide food, as well as cold weather and disease, produced an undisciplined group of settlers. The final blow came when Ayllón died of a fever on October 18, 1526. The remaining colonists chose to return to Santo Domingo. During the return voyage one ship foundered, and only 150 disillusioned survivors reached home (Oviedo:1855:627-633; Morison 1971:332-334; Lee 1965:9-11; Lee 1971:3-4; Watson 1992:4).

Charles Town Settlement

Following the death of Ayllón and the abandoned attempt at settlement, nearly a century and a half passed before the English arrived at the Cape Fear River. In the fall of 1662 William Hilton, commander and agent for a group of people from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which was interested in moving from New England to the Cape Fear area, arrived at the cape aboard the *Adventure*. Hilton gave to the prominent cape at the mouth of the river the name "Cape Fear" and also called the adjacent Jordan River the "Charles River." On the morning of October 4, 1662, Capt. Hilton sailed his ship into the river, where he remained for three weeks, favorably reporting on the region and purchasing from the local Indians much of the surrounding area. Reaching as far upriver in the *Adventure* as the fork in the river (present-day Wilmington), Hilton and some of his crew proceeded in a small boat up the Northeast River, which he mistakenly took to be the main channel. Hilton also explored the Brunswick River, which he named in his own honor. His report of the voyage indicated that he explored "Hilton's River" for several miles and found it to be "as fair, if not fairer than the Northeast branch. . . ." A map prepared by Nicholas Shapley of Massachusetts Bay in 1662 to accompany the written report by William Hilton upon his return to New England is the first map to show the lower Cape Fear in any detail. Cape Fear is not labeled, although it was called "Cape feare" in Hilton's report (Sprunt 1992:30-32; Lee 1965:28-33; Lee 1971:4-5; Lee 1978:12; Reaves 1988:1; USACOE 1977:14).

Encouraged by the favorable report submitted by Hilton, a group of colonists was quickly organized and returned to the Cape Fear that winter, where it briefly established a colony called Charles Town on the western shore of the Cape Fear at the mouth of Indian (Town) Creek. A lack of adequate organization contributed to the Charles Town settlement's being abandoned by April 1663. It was during that time that the king of England granted all of the country south of Virginia to his eight Lords Proprietors of Carolina. Promoters for the new colony from both New England and Barbados petitioned the Lords Proprietors for the right to establish settlements in the lower Cape Fear region, by then known as Clarendon County, after Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, one of the Lords Proprietors. For a brief period of time the waterway